



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
**ASSEMBLY**  
Assembly Standing Committee

**15-17 March 2024**

**DOCUMENT 5**

Title	Act2 Report
Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	For information
Assembly or ASC Minute	22.04.03 to delegate to the Assembly Standing Committee to progress the work on behalf of the Assembly and report to the 17 <sup>th</sup> Assembly;
Consultation	See Attachment A: <i>Act2: The Gift of the Spirit</i> , Chapter 1
Purpose	To provide the report of the Act2 Project for the 17 <sup>th</sup> Assembly including proposals for consideration by the 17 <sup>th</sup> Assembly.
Rationale & Findings Summary	See the report
Attachments	Attachment A: <i>Act2: The Gift of the Spirit</i> Attachment B: Integrated Roadmap (A3)
Proposal/s	That the Assembly Standing Committee <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Receive the report including <i>Act2: The Gift of the Spirit</i></li><li>2. Submit the report <i>Act2: The Gift of the Spirit</i> to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly including the proposals within Chapter 7 for consideration by the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly (see Attachment A for further detail).</li></ol>
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# ACT2 REPORT

## Introduction

The Act team, including both the Project Unit and Steering Committee is proud to provide this report to the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC). In recognition of the extensive project report provided as an attachment to this document, this covering report to the ASC is brief.

## Phase 2: Collective Discernment (June to November 2023)

Since our last report we completed our engagement with the Church for the Collective Discernment Phase. This included:

- Final Synod meeting held in Melbourne 18-21 November
- National Gathering on Theological Education held in Melbourne 6-7 December
- Receiving many final responses and submissions in the final days prior to the 30 November deadline.
- A National Prayer Gathering the night of 30 November to conclude the phase.

## Phase 3: Recommendations for Action (December 2023 to July 2024)

Following the conclusion of the Collective Discernment Phase we have worked to review, analyse and synthesise all the material received. The details of this can be found the attached report (see Attachment A).

Alongside this we have sought external legal advice on aspects of the proposed way forward. We have also been working with the outgoing General Secretary and sought to identify a suitable external provider to consider how to undertake some more detailed financial analysis. We will provide a further update on the progress of legal advice and financial analysis at the ASC meeting.

We have planned a set of resources to accompany the project report and assist the members of the Assembly in understanding the report and proposals. This includes:

1. An interactive website of the final report
2. A Video about our shared identity
3. Video case studies illustrating aspects of the proposals part A. Life Giving Communities of Discipleship and Mission
4. Diagrams to illustrate the proposals and an implementation roadmap

Once the ASC has made its decisions we will move forward with finalising this work.

## Uniting in Prayer 2024

We have launched Uniting in Prayer 2024 which will occur between Pentecost (19 May) and the 47<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Uniting Church (22 June). It is drawing on the theme of the upcoming 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly "Threads of Love, Weaving Christ's Love Across Cultures and Boundaries" as a catalyst for reflection. It is also inviting creativity in the contributions for daily prayer including Video, slides, audio, images, song, poetry, art and dance.

## Steering Committee

Since our last report the Steering Committee has met on two occasions in December and face to face 20-21 January in Adelaide. All members received all the documents via a shared GoogleDrive and were encouraged to include comments directly into the documents before, during and after meetings alongside the discussion and deliberation within the meeting itself.

The Steering Committee met together for the third time face to face. As it has done each time it shared in community and worship including holy communion and prayer. As a community it considered a draft of the report including providing valuable feedback to the Project Unit to shape and improve the draft report. It then worked extensively on considering all the draft proposals. After much struggle and debate over two days the Steering Committee was able to find a way forward by consensus to bring proposals to the ASC

for its consideration. The Steering Committee also believes that all councils that are required to consider these proposals should do so prayerfully and carefully. The deliberations ought to involve struggle and debate. These are not decisions to be taken lightly.

#### *Risk Management*

The Steering Committee continues to monitor the risks related to the project at each of its meetings. While effort has been made to mitigate the risks to this project, ultimately its success now lies largely beyond the control of the Steering Committee or the Project Unit. It now returns to the council of the Assembly for its discernment. In the implementation roadmap, consideration has been given to the resources required to commence implementation of each of the three workstreams. However the commitments of the team members and the Steering Committee conclude in July 2024.

#### *Budget*

The 2023-24 finances have continued in line with the budget. In the recent reforecast process the newly projected budget was \$576,089 against a previous budget of \$584,937. There is still some uncertainty about the costs of some of the expert consultancy work. However, this is being carefully managed in negotiation with the external firms with which we are working.

#### *Project Unit*

We have increased the hours of the Administration and Engagement Officer with a priority to support Uniting in Prayer 2024. Three of the four roles conclude at the end of July. November to January was a particularly intensive time as the team prepared for the meeting of the Steering Committee in January.

### **Conclusion**

As this is likely the final report for this part of the journey of Act2, it is a time to pause and reflect on the considerable amount of work that has occurred since the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly. The ability to achieve this work is a testament to the willingness of so many to invest in the process. This includes the outstanding members of the Act2 Steering Committee. It has been a group that has been ever supportive, but never uncritically so. Their contribution both within and outside the meetings of the Steering Committee have made the work immeasurably better. Their wise counsel, care and thoughtful reflection have been invaluable.

The team have all made a significant contribution to the work. It is a source of great pride to have assembled a diverse team of capable people, willing to take a risk on this project for the sake of the future of the Uniting Church. What the team has built has been largely from scratch and it has been an exciting, challenging and at times exhausting ride. Each has made sacrifices to enable what has been achieved, including through times of significant personal and professional transition.

The Church itself has invested in this project, not always willingly and certainly not uncritically. However, whether through time, personnel or finances, without the investment and animation of the Church in the purpose and processes of this project we would not have made anywhere near the progress we have made in a relatively short period of time. The work is not over and some of the hardest days may lie ahead. However the hope that the Uniting Church can be something closer to its ambitions still fuels the passionate disciples that call the Uniting Church home.

Finally a word on the way forward. The proposals offered to the Church through the ASC and the Assembly are not easy. Many deep conversations and sleepless nights led us to the point of offering the way forward contained within *Act2: The Gift of the Spirit*. Aware as we are of the risks and unknowns, we passionately believe that the path we have outlined brings with it significant opportunities to reimagine our life together. We offer it with humility in the hope that the Church will grapple with what it could mean for its life. We believe that we are in a *Kairos* moment and that time has come to put this pathway before the Assembly in Session in July for its discernment.